

BRITISH COLUMBIA

THE STORY OF A CONVERT.

(A Letter.)

My dear X—: It is with some compunction of heart that I send you my brief articles in the "Orphan Friend," containing as they do strictures upon the faith to which you are giving the best efforts of your life, but I continue to do so because I feel you would rather see them than not.

Now, my dear X—, you must not believe that it was the dictates of an irresponsible selfishness that brought me into the Catholic Church, or that my conversion was in any way a triumph for my own private judgment, rather than a defeat at the hands of an authoritative Faith. No, indeed, it was not an exaggerated sense of the importance of my own views that made me what I now am, but rather a greater realization of the beauty and dignity and truth of views to which the prejudice of past years had blinded me. But now I am no longer blind. I see clearly. And six months after my conversion I can write with all conviction that the obedient surrender of myself to the See and religion of St. Peter is the greatest thing I ever did in my life.

But here perhaps you will object and suggest to yourself doubts whether St. Peter held the same faith that Catholics hold to-day. Well, I will not argue the point with you to-day, but I give you this as my firm conviction, that whatever doctrines may have been promulgated by the Holy See since St. Peter's day, they are only adjustments or re-statements or necessary developments—whether of inspiration, of revelation or of natural growth—of the same old truths, and that the animating spirit of Catholicism is, as I believe, in every essential the same spirit that inspired, moulded, fortified and cheered the Christians of the first century.

But this is a side issue.

I assert again that my conversion was not a triumph, but a defeat; not a planting of my own private standard upon some surprised and captured battlement of Thought, but a bowing down of my neck beneath the heel of a conqueror.

Nor again—to enlarge upon the first point—was my conversion a mere excursion of selfishness. God forbid. It was for other reasons, reasons poles asunder from self-interest, reasons based rather upon altruism and the love I have for you, for all my relatives and friends, and through them, for all mankind. For I entered into the heart of humanity, and I read its sorrows, its passions, its perplexities, its questionings, its rebellions, its conceits, its pride, its wretchedness.

I passed in review the fugitive but bitter woes of childhood, the helplessness and eagerness of youth face to face with all the unexplained enigmas of life and nature, the struggles of manhood, the regret, the discontent and peevishness of age.

I took count of the sorrows of each individual heart as in the course of a brief, but not unob-servant life, they have been made known to me; the upward groping through the night of spiritual darkness; the vacillation of the tempted between good and evil, the long, long patience of the burdened years, the disappointment, the self-reproach, the grief of bereavement, the remorse, the home-coming from afar with empty hands.

And I asked myself: What remedy is there for all this? What relief? What guidance? What power of healing? Where shall man find his bread of sustenance, his staff of support, his kiss of peace, his harbor of refuge? Is there none to help where so many are in need?

And my answer is this: that whatever the individual merits of other Christian denominations,

THE B. C. ORPHAN FRIEND.

it is the Catholic Church—I make my stand this—that is best able to meet all the varied spiritual needs of our marvellous nature. None is fitted to supervise the early steps of childhood, extend to youth the right hand of a general assistance, equip manhood with vigor and illumination, or guide the flagging steps of age into the quiet paths of Happiness and Peace; none accomplishes these tasks with such wisdom, such care or such tender solicitude. Finally, none better than she can hand down the purity of Faith and the beauty of Virtue, or bind together an errant society in all the sweetness and dignity of true religion.

Oh, sacred Heart of Jesus, bring within Thine ancient fold all those that read these words. Make it the place of their resting, that Thou and we in Thee, we all may be one, even Thou Art One with the Father and One with the Holy Spirit in the sacred Unity of the Godhead.

H. K. GORNALL, M.A. (Cantab.)

HISTORICAL NOTES OF VICTORIA CEMETERY.

I.—Quadra Street.

By Father Brabant.

The Catholic community of Victoria and surroundings is to be congratulated upon the acquisition of a piece of property destined for cemetery purposes. Long and often have complaints been made in the country, that we Catholics had no cemetery of our own, whereas, communities of smaller importance and situated in less favorable circumstances, the members of the Church have their own graveyard, blessed and consecrated by the prayers of the Ritual. That respect the Jewish community of Victoria has set an example, for since pioneer times has a cemetery where the members of its persuasion, having worshipped together, are buried together in a common burial-ground.

This addition to our Catholic institutions reminds us of happenings of the past which early pioneers will remember, and which the later generation of British Columbians will learn with interest.

Right in the centre of the city of Victoria, Quadra street, is the old cemetery. It was laid out as such in early days, and was at that time well out of town. It was considered to be a spot for a cemetery, easy of approach, level, free of boulders, rocks and other undesirable obstructions.

The Quadra street cemetery was laid out in plots; and each of the principal religious bodies then represented in the city had its own plot reserved for its own adherents: the Anglicans had theirs, and so had the Presbyterians, the Methodists, and the Catholics. Besides these plots, a large portion of the grounds was reserved for use of people of denominations having no plots of worship in the city, and for the public generally.

The Catholic plot was on the south-east corner, and access to it was had by the side gate, which was opened from the road between the cemetery and the Anglican Bishop's garden.

In 1860 the representatives of the Church of England sent out a Bishop to take charge of the interests, spiritual and temporal, of their denomination in British Columbia. The new incumbent, this being at that time an English colony, looked upon his promotion and subsequent position with light that others could not see—an English colony is not England itself; and he soon felt very much disappointed; to add to his chagrin, he had written certain letters to England about things which people in the colony, which appeared in

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English papers, copies of which were before long
received in town and read by some prominent
members of his own communion—the people he
had written about—and it hurt their feelings
very much. Through this and other causes, the
new Episcopal Bishop became very unpopular.
Still his greatest adversaries would allow that
he was a real gentleman, that he was zealous and
dignified, and in every respect worthy of the trust
his church had placed in him. His own people
used to say that "he was too big for the place";
and through an idea which he had of his own
importance, he made mistakes which sometimes
cost him afterwards sorry feelings of confusion
and humiliation.

Thus on one occasion, without consulting any
of the men then in power or authority, he made
up his mind that he would enlarge his already
extensive garden grounds and take in and annex
to them the road which separated his garden from
the cemetery; in other words, the road used by
the Catholics to go to their own part of the grave-
yard. And so he got some workmen to run a
fence according to his plans and calculations; and
a very good and solid fence it was, a credit to
the workmen, and some people even said, a great
improvement to the looks of the surroundings.

But lo! what should happen? There were at
that time in Victoria quite a number of Cariboo
miners—fine, good-hearted young fellows, but
like others of their class, not adverse to having a
little fun, and incidentally perhaps being up to a
bit of mischief. Quite a few of them were mem-
bers of the church, and like all sons of Erin were
in love with their clergy, for whose sakes and
rights they were ready to peel off their coats at
any time. It soon came to their ears that a fence
had been put up; that the way to their portion
of the graveyard was now blocked up. Did the
Fathers, did the Bishop know of it? No one
could tell; it made no difference. "Boys," said
one of them, "we are going to stand no non-
sense. That fence is going to come down." And,
indeed, before nightfall came, a dozen or more
men were prepared for the work. They later met
on Quadra street, and when daylight came, the
road of the Catholics to the cemetery was open
again. And not a post of the obnoxious fence was
left standing.

It seems that when the work of destruction had
been completed, one of the indignant miners had
proposed, and the proposition was endorsed by all
present, to make a gift to their own Bishop, the
Catholic Bishop, of the tools which they had used
in what they considered the protection of their
rights. "It will make him feel good," as the
speaker remarked.

But when in the morning the good Bishop found
in his shed a dozen or more brand-new axes, and
heard of what had been done, it did not "make
him feel good" at all. On the contrary, it made
him feel very bad and it upset his nerves com-
pletely. Was not the presence of the axes on his
premises going to be used as a proof that he had
instigated the mischief? However, I never heard
of such accusations being made or even suspicions
entertained; and very properly so. For Bishop
Demers was eminently a man of peace, and he
would have been the very last man in the colony
to have recourse to force in order to carry a point
which the courts could and would settle.

I may here also remark that the Anglican pre-
late had all along acted in good faith. The man
was under the impression that he had a right to
the land taken in by the road, and that it actu-
ally belonged to his Church. How was the diffi-
culty settled? The matter was taken before a
court of competent judges, as it should have
been before an attempt was made to put up a
fence, in spite of timely protestations, and that

court decided that the road was to remain open as it had been up to that time; and, as everybody can see for himself, it is still open to-day, but it is probably the least frequented and the most desolate looking road within the city limits.

Before Confederation, the church registers were the legal registers; all funerals and marriages were to be entered therein; and lawyers and others of the legal profession expected of the heads of the churches to be allowed access to their books and take copies of the "acts" therein contained.

Since Confederation, the task of keeping the legal registers has been taken over by the Government, at whose offices all deeds and acts must be entered. Yet the old system worked very satisfactorily. I can recall only one occasion when the entering of an act of a funeral gave occasion to considerable unpleasantness.

Opposite the Bishop's old residence on Collinson street, stood what was called the French hospital. It had and kept that name, although there were more non-French members than natives of France. The inscription above the door deceived many French scholars: it read, "Maison de Sante Francaise," which inscription many took to mean—a French insane asylum. However, it was an hospital; but only subscribers to the "French Hospital Society" were admitted. A dozen or more years ago the French hospital ceased to exist. The board of directors offered to the Sisters of St. Ann to take charge of it, but they made such conditions that the good Sisters could not accept the offer; it was then afterwards amalgamated with the Jubilee hospital.

Late in the sixties, whilst the French hospital was enjoying its most prosperous times, one of its directors was taken sick and brought in for treatment. He was a Frenchman, as all the directors were, had been baptized, and of course was supposed to be a Catholic. The priests of the Bishop's house, hearing that the man was very bad and in fact, according to the statement of the doctors, was not likely to recover, went to visit him time and again; but the sick man protested at any and every time, when the subject was broached to him, that he would not accept the ministrations of the Church; that he had lived out of the Church and would die out of it.

One day, just as the priests sat down to dinner, a messenger came running down from the hospital. "Quick! Quick! Mr. (he named the sick Frenchman) wants to see a priest." One of the priests jumped up, ran to the bed of the sick man and found him—dead.

The man was dead before the messenger was sent, but his friends made use of this dodge to secure for him "ecclesiastical sepulture." The Bishop and his priests at once detected the imposition, and guided by the dictates of their conscience and the laws of the Church, they refused to bury the impenitent infidel. He was, however, buried in the Catholic plot of the Quadra street cemetery. The Bishop, having heard of the preparations that were being made on our exclusive ground, was in a quandary. We could not and would not allow the sacred rites over the grave of a man who had refused them as long as he was alive. Some people would have called it an act of kindness; but in reality it would have been an outrage, and an act of cowardice, to avail himself of the helplessness in death of the impenitent man and to force, as it were, upon his remains sacred ceremonies against which he had protested, to which he had objected to the very last, and to which he was therefore supposed still to object.

What then did he do? Afraid that fault might be found with him, if he did not enter the act of

burial in his register—the register lie plot—he sent two of his priests out of sight on the grounds, with witness from a distance that the ally taken place, and then entered register. But, unfortunately, it had been noticed from their place of the mourners; and the French forgave the Bishop this act of intrusion. It was, however, at this was not the main cause of the burial itself something had happened, which gave occasion to a great amount of trouble, if not of very serious nature. It seems that when the corpse was taken to the hearse and placed alongside of the most intimate friends, the man made up their minds that the Bishop and his priests had refused to bury them, and they would have religious ceremonies. But not one of the mourners had an ordinary prayer book, and although they commenced the recitation of the prayer, they all, one after the other, before reaching the end thereof.

It has often struck me: how unreasonable, that people of the clergy, hate the Church, and speak of the infidels or atheists, when death comes to their friends, men of the same class, about securing for them an ecclesiastical funeral, with the ceremonies of the Church. I have been admitted that well-meaning people sometimes found who do not see the difference between their ecclesiastical superiors when they are refused over the remains of their applicants. They evidently do not understand the position of the clergy, and the motives of their conduct in such circumstances. When a judge is on his last passes, on an unfortunate criminal, about death, does it mean that this man is sure in doing so? Do we not hear of people breaking down and sobbing at the thought of passing the sentence of death, it is with bishops and priests: full of grief that they refuse the rites of a Catholic funeral; but the bench they must do in their case as clergymen, in the Canon and laws of the Church, that priests and even bishops, have the displeasure of the people and loss of respect for refusing the rites of the Church in the case of funerals. But they have consolation, and that consolation is in the laws of the Church, they are duty to God, and therefore they are found fault with, they can rejoice that "Blessed are they that suffer for justice's sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

II.—Ross Bay.

We now take leave of the Quadra street cemetery, while breathing, from the heart, a prayer for the eternal repose of the dead, and pass to the, comparatively new graveyard at Ross Bay.

In the late seventies, plans were made for the acquisition of a new cemetery, at Ross Bay were secured. Like the cemetery of Quadra street, the ground was divided and partitioned in lots, and each of the religious denominations at the same time a cemetery board was appointed of each and each to represent its adherents and interests.

Mr. Patrick McTiernan, a g

burial in his register—the register of the Catholic plot—he sent two of his priests, who, although out of sight on the grounds, would be able to witness from a distance that the burial had actually taken place, and then enter the fact on the register. But, unfortunately, these priests had been noticed from their place of hiding by some of the mourners; and the French people never forgave the Bishop this act of, what they called, intrusion. It was, however, an open secret that this was not the main cause of their ire. At the burial itself something had happened which afterwards gave occasion to a great deal of gossip around town, if not of very sarcastic remarks. It seems that when the corpse was taken out of the hearse and placed alongside of the grave, several of the most intimate friends of the dead man made up their minds that although the Bishop and his priests had refused their services, they would have religious ceremonies anyhow. But not one of the mourners had even as much as an ordinary prayer book, and although several of them commenced the recitation of the Lord's prayer, they all, one after the other, broke down before reaching the end thereof.

It has often struck me: how strange it is and how unreasonable, that people who despise the clergy, hate the Church, and spend their lives as infidels or atheists, when death overtakes their friends, men of the same class, are so particular about securing for them an ecclesiastical funeral with the ceremonies of the Church. And it must be admitted that well-meaning Catholics are sometimes found who do not scruple to criticise their ecclesiastical superiors when the rites of the church are refused over the remains of unworthy applicants. They evidently do not understand the position of the clergy, and they misinterpret the motives of their conduct under the circumstances. When a judge is on the bench and passes, on an unfortunate criminal, the sentence of death, does it mean that this judge takes pleasure in doing so? Do we not hear of magistrates breaking down and sobbing at that terrible moment of passing the sentence of death? And so it is with bishops and priests: it is with a heart full of grief that they refuse the rites and privileges of a Catholic funeral; but like a judge on the bench they must do their duty: which duty, in their case as clergymen, is defined by the canons and laws of the Church. We all know that priests and even bishops, have incurred the displeasure of the people and lost their popularity for refusing the rites of the Church on the occasion of funerals. But they have one great consolation, and that consolation is, that by observing the laws of the Church, they have done their duty to God, and therefore they are criticised and found fault with, they can rejoice in the thought that "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

II.—Ross Bay.

We now take leave of the Quadra Street cemetery, while breathing, from the bottom of our heart, a prayer for the eternal rest of its occupants, and pass to the, comparatively speaking, new graveyard at Ross Bay.

In the late seventies, plans were made for the acquisition of a new cemetery, and the grounds at Ross Bay were secured. Like at the old cemetery of Quadra street, the grounds were laid out and partitioned in lots, and a lot set apart for each of the religious denominations. At the same time a cemetery board was formed, and a member appointed of each and every communion, to represent its adherents and attend to their interests.

Mr. Patrick McTiernan, a gentleman with a

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clear head, full of common sense, and esteemed by everybody, whether belonging to the faith or not, was appointed for and worthily represented his fellow Catholics on the Board until the Dominion Government asked him to accept the position of Indian Agent at New Westminster.

At one of the first meetings of the Board, on the suggestion of Bishop Seghers, Mr. McTiernan proposed the question: "Who is to judge or to determine whether a man or a woman died in the Catholic communion or not?" After some discussion, the members of the Board made their answer unanimous, and it was to the effect: that the Bishop, or the parish priest appointed by him, was to determine and decide the matter. And, being pressed to do so, the Board gave their answer in writing, which Mr. McTiernan afterwards delivered to the Bishop. This was a very valuable acquisition and, before many months had elapsed, it was practically and successfully made use of.

A Frenchman died in Seattle; he had lived many years in Victoria, having been in business there, and he was well and favorably known by the people in general. His family had the body brought to Victoria for interment, and made application to have it buried in the Catholic plot of the Ross Bay cemetery. But he was a Catholic only in name, never set foot in the church, and besides he was a free-mason. The Bishop, therefore, in virtue of the power which he had received from the Cemetery Board, refused permission to have the body buried in our portion of the cemetery. The family of the deceased expected that much and took the decision gracefully. But not so some of the dead man's friends; and we soon were informed that trouble was brewing; that a petition was being circulated, and very numerous signed, to have the cemetery thrown open to all applicants, and to have the separation and privileges granted to the different religious denominations abolished: all of which would have the effect of the recent "unpleasantness" not being repeated.

In due time this petition was presented to and came before the House of Parliament, and a bill called the "Evans Cemetery Bill," was drawn up, with the object, of course, of having it passed and the cemetery thrown open promiscuously to the public. A special committee having been appointed, with the late Doctor Tolmie as chairman, a very civil letter was sent to Bishop Seghers, requesting his presence at the Government buildings, to meet the members of the committee; which he did at the appointed place

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and time. The Bishop, although not informed, suspected what was coming, and he left his residence duly prepared for his reception. Dr. Tolmie, the chairman of the committee, and Bishop Seghers were old acquaintances, if not old friends. The doctor very cautiously and dexterously introduced the subject to be talked about, and finished by asking the Bishop "in virtue of what power he had refused admittance to the corpse of the Frenchman in the Catholic section of the cemetery?" The Bishop answered politely but pointedly that he had done so, in virtue of the power which had been granted to him by the Cemetery Board as Bishop of the diocese. Of course they all believed this statement, but could he produce proofs that the Cemetery Board had really given him that power?

This was almost too much for the young Bishop, but he managed to keep his feelings under control. "Yes," said he, "I have proofs. I have proofs in the shape of a letter from the Board, which I have here in my pocket." "Oh, indeed. Would Your Lordship please let us have that letter?" "No, sir, I am not going to part with that letter. But while I hold it in my own hand I will allow your secretary to take a copy of it." This was subsequently done, and the Bishop took his leave amidst the apologies and thanks of the gentlemen appointed "to sit" on the famous "Evans Cemetery Bill."

I do not know what became of the "Evans Bill." But I know that the part which the Victoria Standard, now defunct, but at that time the Government organ, took in the matter, cost the editor of that paper the humiliation to recant publicly and make an abject apology, for making certain uncalled for and untruthful assertions reflecting on our Bishop for the stand he had taken in defending his position. And I should think that the matter of the petition and of the Bill,

which was drawn up in consequence, must have been dropped; for the management of the Ross Bay cemetery has remained the same, as it has from the beginning, and it seems to continue under the old or original plan, to leave to the general public no room for complaints.

In conclusion, it may not be generally known that more than once, steps had been taken by the authorities of the Church to secure ground for a graveyard of our own. The late Very Rev. Mandart, being Administrator during the absence of the Bishop, at one time, bought a piece of property which would have made an ideal graveyard; but before the bargain was concluded it became rumoured that the ground was wanted for that purpose, and the owner of the property backed out, and the deeds were refused. Again, a score or more years ago, another parcel of land was bought, this time through the services of a private party, so that no suspicions should be aroused that it was for cemetery purposes. Objections, of a different nature, to the property being used as a graveyard were made, and as the plans and calculations of the authorities of the Church were frustrated.

Now that success has crowned their efforts, Catholics of Victoria, as we said at the outset, are to be congratulated upon coming in possession of an ideal spot for a cemetery of their own. Ross Bay, adjacent to the public cemetery, where so many of their friends and relatives are already buried. Let them see to it, that this new acquisition may deserve to be looked upon as a credit to the Church and a becoming resting place of the remains of the children of the Faith.

A. J.

We should never repulse the poor. If we do not give them anything, we should pray to inspire others to do so.

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RELIGIOUS TOLERATION IN ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

The English Catholic Directory for 1908, just issued, gives statistics showing the Catholic population of the British Empire to be now estimated as follows: In the United Kingdom, 5,500,000 (viz., Great Britain, 2,180,000; Ireland, 3,320,000); Gibraltar, Malta, and Gozo, 215,000; Asia, 2,035,000; Africa, 350,500; America, 2,810,000; Australasia, 1,092,500 (viz. Australia, 955,500; New Zealand, 107,000; Fiji and other Islands, 30,000); total Catholics in the Empire, 12,053,000. It is also stated that in the British House of Lords there are thirty-four Catholics, and in the House of Commons eight Catholics representing constituencies in Great Britain.

This last-mentioned fact does not compare favourably in the matter of religious toleration with the number of Protestants elected by Catholics in Catholic Ireland. The total number of British members of the House of Commons is 567, only eight of whom are Catholics, whereas of the 83 Nationalist members elected in Ireland (in districts overwhelmingly Catholic) ten are Protestants. Yet the English Unionist press endorse the Ulster Protestant argument against Home Rule that under an Irish Parliament, with a Catholic majority, Protestants would be persecuted because of their religion.

Crosses are, on the road to heaven, like a fine stone bridge over a river.

We may almost say that we are fortunate in having temptations. The period of their duration is, in truth, the season of the spiritual harvest, in which we are garnering stores. It is like the harvest time, when men rise early and labor hard, but make no complaint, because they gather much.

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